United Nations S/2017/200

Security Council

Distr.: General
8 March 2017

Original: English

Letter dated 8 March 2017 from the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and in view of the discussions on Burundi to be held in the Security Council on 9 March 2017, I transmit herewith a report on the Commission's ongoing engagement in Burundi.

I should be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated to the members of the Security Council and also be issued as a document of the Council.

I remain committed to cooperation between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission on Burundi.

(*Signed*) Jürg **Lauber**
Chair of the Burundi configuration
Peacebuilding Commission

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Annex to the letter dated 8 March 2017 from the Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission addressed to the President of the Security Council

Report of the Peacebuilding Commission on the situation in Burundi

In view of the Security Council consultations on Burundi to be held on 9 March 2017, I would like to report on my ongoing engagement as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

1. Activities of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission since the last oral briefing to the Security Council, on 18 March 2016

From 4 to 9 July 2016, I travelled to Burundi and Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania, in order to pursue the dialogue with the Government and key stakeholders as well as with the East African Community facilitator of the Inter-Burundi Dialogue and former President of the United Republic of Tanzania, Benjamin Mkapa.

On 7 and 8 November 2016, the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Burundi, Paolo Lembo, and I convened the main multilateral partners of Burundi for socioeconomic consultations on Burundi in Geneva. The World Bank, the African Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the European Union and several representatives of the United Nations country team participated in these consultations.

My overall approach to peacebuilding has remained holistic, that is, pertaining to all three pillars of the mandate of the United Nations. In 2016, I held six meetings of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission and briefed the Security Council on three occasions (once orally and twice in writing).

2. Assessment of the current situation in Burundi

At their most recent meetings, members of the configuration heard reports by various United Nations entities, all of which underscored that the situation in Burundi requires sustained attention and support from international partners, for example:

- Reports of human rights monitoring mechanisms concerning the situation of public security and human rights, including with regard to acts of violence and violations of human rights, as well as pressure on civil society organizations and human rights defenders.
- Reports of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Conflict Prevention, including in Burundi, Jamal Benomar, on the ongoing political impasse, including the lack of confidence between the Government and the opposition and the situation of the media, as well as on national, regional and international efforts to find a political settlement of the crisis.
- Reports of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the United Nations country team on the deteriorating socioeconomic situation.

Regarding the socioeconomic situation, the consultations which took place in Geneva on 7 and 8 November 2016 were particularly insightful:

- The country's five participating partners shared the view that Burundi is currently experiencing severe macroeconomic difficulties, which were

reflected in negative growth in growth domestic product in 2015 and 2016. Food insecurity affects a much larger area of Burundi than in 2015, and consumer prices are on the rise.

- They identified food security and agriculture, health and education as the sectors which are most seriously affected by the current situation.

- Besides these sectors, the need for broader macroeconomic engagement in Burundi was emphasized in Geneva, since decreasing fiscal revenues (partly related to decreased investments and direct budgetary support) are putting the national budget under pressure.

- In view of these economic indicators, the partners of Burundi showed continued readiness to address the needs of the population and to prevent a further deterioration of the situation.

While recognizing the importance of the contribution of Burundi in African Union and United Nations peacekeeping operations, members of the configuration expressed concerns about the signals of disengagement sent by the Government of Burundi to its regional and international partners, for instance by suspending its cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

We welcome the fact that, on 24 February 2017, the Government of Burundi transmitted to OHCHR in Geneva a draft agreement between the Republic of Burundi and the United Nations concerning the establishment of an office of OHCHR in Burundi.

However, I am personally afraid that, faced with the current situation, the international partners may decide to disengage from the Government and the people of Burundi.

3. Ideas on the way forward for sustained efforts in peacebuilding

Peacebuilding in Burundi requires a long-term vision and sustained efforts. Abandoning Burundi now would mean wasting past efforts and putting the country and its people at risk of recurring conflict.

While the primary responsibility for the well-being of the Burundian people lies with the Government of Burundi, the international partners must maintain their support for current efforts aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement of the crisis in Burundi.

I would therefore like to invite the regional and international partners of Burundi, in particular the relevant parts of the United Nations system, to maintain and where possible step up their support in the areas of peace and security, human rights, political reconciliation and institution-building, as well as with regard to humanitarian aid, socioeconomic development and the preparation for credible, peaceful and democratic elections in 2020.

At the same time, I invite the Government of Burundi to recognize its partners' goodwill and facilitate the efforts of the East African Community, the African Union and the United Nations to engage with Burundi in order to advance the Inter-Burundi Dialogue, and to strengthen cooperation with both the African Union and the United Nations.

I welcome any efforts for reconciliation within Burundi as well as ongoing dialogue inside and outside the country. I also welcome the efforts of the East African Community facilitator of the Inter-Burundi Dialogue and wish to reassure him of the configuration's continued support for his work. I am convinced that it

would be of great benefit for Member States if the facilitator could at some point brief the Security Council and the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission on the developments in the Inter-Burundi Dialogue.

4. Ongoing and planned activities of the configuration

I plan to travel to Burundi from 27 to 31 March 2017 in order:

- To gain a first-hand impression of the situation on the ground
- To meet with the Government, opposition and civil society
- To pursue the socioeconomic dialogue
- To brief the Government on my ongoing conversations with the partners of Burundi

I see the continuation of the socioeconomic dialogue not only as an opportunity to address socioeconomic challenges but also as a means to increase confidence between the Government and its international partners.

After my next visit to Burundi, I will continue working with the members of the configuration, including the Government of Burundi, and with the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office, on a variety of peacebuilding activities with a view to supporting the country's path towards sustainable peace. The activities of the configuration will remain in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and will continue to be discussed with relevant international, regional and subregional partners, in particular the facilitator of the East African Community-led process.

I will keep the Security Council informed about my visit to Burundi and my planned engagement, in accordance with established practice.